

# HEIRS PROPERTY IN DALLAS COUNTY

State of Dallas Housing

2019

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### PREPARED BY

The buildingcommunityWORKSHOP is a Texas based nonprofit community design center seeking to improve the livability and viability of communities through the practice of thoughtful design and making. We enrich the lives of citizens by bringing design thinking to areas of our city where resources are most scarce. To do so, [bc] recognizes that it must first understand the social, economic, and environmental issues facing a community before beginning work.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Home to over 7.5 million people, North Texas is the largest region in the State of Texas. More than 2.6 million of those people—or almost 10% of the state’s population—live in Dallas County.<sup>1</sup> These people are housed in greater than 600,000 residential properties, collectively valued at over \$180,000,000,000, over eight percent of the entire state’s property wealth. Yet that wealth is not distributed equally across the region.<sup>2</sup>

In recent years, North Texas has seen an influx of new employers and residents, bringing notable development and growth to certain pockets of the region. However, legacies of past discrimination continue to keep residents in many neighborhoods from benefiting from this growth and development. Civic, political, and economic barriers created over generations, through legal and illegal means, prevented most African American and Latinx households from taking advantage of the common pathways to building wealth. This is particularly relevant when exploring the impact of discrimination in housing and property ownership. The legacies of legal and illegal housing discrimination can be felt in the highly segregated realities of today’s Dallas County neighborhoods.<sup>3</sup>

This report continues to advance the work of previous State of Dallas Housing Reports by examining a specific issue related to wealth accumulation, racial justice, and the role of policy in shaping neighborhoods -- the issue of heirs property. Heirs properties are common in historically Black and Latinx communities, and can contribute to property disinvestment, neighborhood vacancy, and property loss.

This document examines the scale and distribution of heirs properties in Dallas County, including the following findings:

- We estimate that there are between 6,900 and 15,000 properties in Dallas County with an unclear title.
- Heirs properties represent somewhere between \$981,360,500 and \$1,521,368,140 in property value (or 0.5% - 1.4% of the value of all residential properties in Dallas County).
- More than a third of all heirs properties are concentrated in 7% of the county’s block groups.
- Single-family heirs properties are devalued by approximately 10%, when compared to neighboring non-heirs properties, representing a potential lost value of between \$107,464,138 and \$252,210,298.

Additionally, this document seeks to convey the implications of heirs title ownership has on individuals and neighborhoods, which neighborhoods are most affected, and how different people contextualize and understand this issue as it relates to their lives. We will also outline possible policy solutions and attempt to frame our research in national and regional conversations about land loss, wealth preservation, and neighborhood change.

<sup>1</sup> North Central Texas Council of Governments, 2019 Population Estimate Program

<sup>2</sup> Texas Comptroller County Values, 2017

<sup>3</sup> Center for Public Policy Priorities, Dallas Economic Assessment, March, 2018



Photo Credit: [bc]

## DEFINING HEIRS PROPERTY

Heirs property is understood as a residential property with multiple heirs who have fractional claims to ownership.<sup>4</sup> When a property is not legally transferred after the death of the owner, through processing a Will or a Transfer Upon Death Deed, it is passed down to surviving relatives based on state law. When a property is transferred to multiple heirs it affects the clarity of the property — a property with one or two owners is commonly referred to as having a clear title, while an heirs property has an unclear title. The longer the ownership of an heirs property goes unaddressed, the higher the likelihood that the number of heirs to the property will increase and be more distantly related.<sup>5</sup> With each new heir, the more challenging it becomes to clear the title, or return it back to one or two owners.

Having a multiplicity of heirs, or co-tenants, can complicate how decisions are made about a property, including making improvements, selling it, or leveraging the property's equity. Residents of heirs properties have no preferential claim over the property, despite the fact that they may pay the property taxes and maintain the property. Not being the full owner of their property prevents residents of heirs property from taking advantage of the tax benefits and support programs available to homeowners.

In the event that one heir, or co-tenant, wants to use or sell the property they must seek the approval of the other heirs. If the heirs can not come to an agreement, the court may be asked to intervene to make a decision. A common example of this is a court ordered forced sale, which like its name suggests is the forced sale of a property by the court. It is a common solution for heirs properties, because it clears the title while allowing the heirs to extract the value of their claim. The actions of one heir may throw the status of the entire property into question, as creditors and real estate speculators attempt to leverage an unclear title to remediate debt or acquire property at a discount.

## TRANSFER ON DEATH DEED

A Transfer on Death Deed (TODD) is a simple, inexpensive way to transfer real estate to someone else upon your death. It does not involve going through probate court, which can be a lengthy and costly process. It works similarly to a life insurance policy or a payable on death account at a bank, because the real estate passes to your beneficiary upon your death outside the probate system. [TexasLawHelp.org]

<sup>4</sup> An heir is a descendant or family member of a decedent  
<sup>5</sup> Gaither, Zarnoch 2017

## LAQUESHA'S STORY

Originally, Laquesha Levers lived in a house with her mother and grandmother in South Dallas. When her grandmother passed in the 1990s, Laquesha and her mother sold the first house and moved in with Laquesha's aunt and uncle, who owned a house down the street on Warren Avenue. By Laquesha's recollection, they sold it for around \$5,000 to a corporate homebuyer who advertised as a "we buy ugly houses" company.

After Laquesha's aunt and uncle died, she continued to stay in the house with her mother. Because her grandmother had already died and they had sold her house, when her mother died, she assumed she would get the house she was currently living in.

However, the house actually went first to her mother's father, who was deceased, and then to her mother's father's wife, who was also deceased, and then eventually, to her mother's father's wife's son. Laquesha doesn't know what happened from there, but eventually, the house ended up with the City of Dallas.

In the span of 20 years, this family went from owning two properties to owning zero. Of course, homeownership remains a goal, but given current prices even in the neighborhood, it would be cost-prohibitive for Laquesha to purchase another house. In her words, the homes needed some repairs, but both were childhood homes for her and her family. She currently lives in Pleasant Grove in an apartment and has a 1-year-old daughter and a 9-year-old son. Laquesha works with the Texas Tenants Union to advocate for tenant's rights.

Her story raises some important questions as we consider the implication of redlining and potential policy solutions. Much of this begins with processes associated with heirs properties, which has gone mostly unchanged for decades. How do we understand the impact of this process and how it contributes to property loss among Black and Latinx property owners? We can track properties in great detail, but it is much more difficult to track the impact that lost value has on one person or family. Future efforts to clear heirs property titles before forced or tax sales should build in metrics to assess impacts in the years after the title is resolved. Another measure that is difficult to ascertain is what happens to people after an heirs property is lost from a family. As part of efforts to slow property loss in the City and County, can we explore ways in which individuals and families affected by past policies can regain property? Heirs property is not a problem with a single policy fix, but instead demands a contextual and historical understanding to the problems affiliated with land loss.

## HISTORY & IMPACT OF HEIRS PROPERTY

Heirs properties are particularly common among African American and Latinx landholding. “The practice began during Reconstruction, when many African Americans didn’t have access to the legal system, and it continued through the Jim Crow era, when black communities were suspicious of white Southern courts.”<sup>6</sup>

Today, it is estimated that up to 40% of African American controlled rural farmland in the southeastern United States is held in the heirs property system, equating to roughly 3.5 million acres, valued at more than \$28 billion. And more heirs properties are being created every day — it is estimated that 76% of African Americans do not have a will, which is double that of white Americans.<sup>7</sup>

In urban contexts, a cloudy title can be seen as an obstacle to a variety of neighborhood processes and conditions. Selling or transferring a property, as we have mentioned, is one of the biggest impacts. This can lead to vacant housing, and over time vacant land. In neighborhoods with a concentration of heirs properties, this form of vacancy can impact neighborhood quality, vibrancy, and hinder the addition of new residents and development.

Neighborhood values can be affected by a concentration of heirs properties. When compared to their neighbors, the values of heirs properties are more likely lower. This may contribute to a neighborhood remaining affordable, but it may also keep other property owners from seeing growth in their property values. As we have discussed, heirs properties are more likely to experience deliberate disinvestment in properties, and they may additionally suffer from shorter resident tenure.<sup>8</sup>

## HEIRS PROPERTY & SUPPORT PROGRAMS

Historically federal and state programs have prevented heirs property holders from accessing benefits, but this is changing. The United States Department of Agriculture recently allowed heirs property holders to file for farm tax benefits without clearing title.<sup>9</sup> In Texas, a new law allows homestead exemptions for heirs property owners as well, which could encourage other agencies and jurisdictions to adopt similar practices.<sup>10</sup>

## HEIRS PROPERTY & DISASTER RECOVERY

In disaster recovery situations, unclear title can lead to delays in accessing funds for home repair and recovery and increase neighborhood vacancy, compounding the impacts of disaster damage. For instance, after Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans, many residents were delayed relief funding for up to a year after the storm because the Road Home Program did not allow access to federal funds without a clear title. This stipulation ultimately led to greater displacement for many people who could not prove title in the months and years after the storm.<sup>11</sup> It is estimated that up to \$165 million of recovery funds were never Apart from the financial and historical impacts of heirs properties.<sup>12</sup>

Apart from the financial and historical impacts of heirs properties, families and neighborhood residents often have strong emotional and social ties to a property. This only highlights the importance of how an heirs property goes about resolving its title issue. If a property is resolved in a manner that is seen as unfavorable to family members or neighborhood residents, it may impact the emotional and social connections in the community. Additionally, co-tenants that leave an heirs property unused may garner resentment from neighboring property owners.<sup>13</sup>

The implications of heirs property are not entirely negative. Especially in the rural context, many people see heirs property as a way to safeguard property from expropriation via unethical development or court practices. Given the long history of illegal and legal activity devoted to wresting control of land from African American families through much of the twentieth century and the relative impotence of civil institutions in slowing this land loss, some have made the claim that ensuring many members of a family are bought into a property could ensure its protection. More so, heirs property represents a form of informal communal landholding. Most practices devoted to heirs property clearance focus on resolving and solidifying title for a few individuals. This ensures individual and familial wealth accumulation and is generally a sound strategy for keeping land.

6 Presser 2019

7 Presser 2019

8 Dyer, Bailey, Van Tran 2009

9 Dairy Business

10 TX SB 1943

11 Peterson 2009

12 Presser 2019

13 Sean Johnson, personal interview

## PROPERTY LOSS

Property and home ownership has served as a pathway to the American Dream, and a connection to a family's history. It has also served as a key tool in building both individual and family wealth. While heirs may view their family properties in a similar fashion, they are often unaware of how precarious their ownership status is. Current laws, loopholes, and taxing practices make co-tenants particularly vulnerable to losing their property.

### *Loss through Forced Sales*

One of the most common causes of involuntary land loss among heirs properties is through a court order forced sale or partition action. In favorable situations, co-tenants may agree that the easiest way to clear the property title is to sell it and divide the proceeds. In more contentious scenarios, one co-tenant may seek a forced sale despite the objections of other co-tenants. The ability of one co-tenant to drive this process is what makes heirs properties so vulnerable to speculators and developers. In areas with increasing desirability, there have been cases where a developer, in an effort to acquire a property, will purchase the shares of one or more co-tenants and then file a petition of partition to force a sale. And since the process is similar to that of a tax lien sale, they are able to purchase the whole property below market value.<sup>14</sup>

Recognizing that the law was being used to the detriment of heirs property owners, in 2018 the Uniform Partition of Heirs Property Act (UPHPA), passed. Prior to the UPHPA, state law forced judges to consider primarily economic implications; they could not withhold an order to sell the property because it could oust someone from their home. The passage of the UPHPA changed these provisions in two key ways. First, by allowing other heirs to buy out the shares of those looking to sell within 45 days. Second, by allowing judges to favor in-kind property splits along with using brokers and open market sales rather than auctions. It must also consider the impact on the co-tenants as a group, not just on the single co-tenant requesting partition. The idea is that UPHPA will ensure courts are considering the current use of the property beyond simply the rights of one tenant to sell their share. Furthermore, under the UPHPA, the property is sold on the open market as opposed to a closed bid or auction, where it has been argued properties often sell below market value.<sup>15</sup> However, the impact of this legislation remains to be seen, and it only works by clearing a property at the time of a transaction.

### *Loss through Tax Foreclosure*

A less direct, but just as significant means of involuntary property loss is due to tax delinquency and foreclosure. This form of loss commonly has multiple contributing factors, which may be directly due to the cloudy title of an heirs property, or made more complicated by the lack of a clear title.

Co-tenants can get behind on their taxes due to simple administrative issues, such as the tax bill being sent to the wrong co-tenant, or someone other than the current resident of the property, leaving the resident unaware of

mounting unpaid taxes. Dramatic increases in property values is another common cause of tax delinquency. Heirs properties, until recently, have not been able to take advantage of the same property tax protections as other residential property owners. In a property tax heavy state like Texas, homestead exemptions are the primary tool for urban property owners to offset rising property values.

No matter the reason for tax delinquency, at a certain point of the taxing agencies can force the sale of the property to pay unpaid taxes. In this process, the property is auctioned through a tax lien foreclosure and sheriff ordered tax sale. In these types of sales, the property is often priced significantly below market value.

### *Value or Equity Loss*

A clear title can significantly curtail the potential financial benefit of a home or property. This value loss can come in the form of lower appraisal values, the means by which the property is sold, or the inability to access equity, tax benefits, or available homeowner support programs.

Because co-tenants of an heirs property cannot be sure of a direct future return on any investment in their property, many may be hesitant to make any significant investment. This form of disinvestment may explain why heirs properties are often appraised lower than neighboring properties on a price per square foot basis.

For those living in heirs property—who despite the lack of a clear title live like any other homeowner—the inability to access the equity in their home can be a significant loss over time. Using your home as collateral for a loan or leveraging the equity in your home is typically not possible without a clear title. When residents do seek a loan, the process is typically stopped until the title can be cleared. For those seeking money for needed upgrades, repairs, or property investments, the costs and time associated with successfully clearing a title may delay seeking a loan indefinitely.<sup>16</sup>

## FAMILIAL OWNERSHIP

While the provisions in UPHPA provided needed judicial guidance for heirs, current conventional means of cleaning a title are a common thread in property loss. To address this concern, we should explore how enshrining communal land ownership could address the problematic nature of unclear titles, while supporting family ownership. This could include: family trusts, limited liability company (LLC), or perhaps community land trusts. New models of addressing heirs property may be particularly timely for land owners in neighborhoods growing in popularity, as a way to mitigate the impacts of rapidly rising land cost.

<sup>14</sup> Presser 2019

<sup>15</sup> Gaither, Zarnoch 2017

<sup>16</sup> Bartels 2012

## ANALYSIS OF HEIRS PROPERTY IN DALLAS

Through this report, we identified 6,957 heirs parcels that we can confirm with fair certainty in 2019, with an additional 9,541 properties that could or could not be heirs.<sup>17</sup> By using county appraisal data, we were able to develop a weighting algorithm that sorted properties by various criteria established in academic literature and through interviews.

These numbers include all properties that had clouded title related to someone dying intestate (without a will). Some of these properties have gone to probate and the process was incomplete, or is still actively being contested. Some of the property owners had wills but they did not go to probate, or if they did, it was years after the property owner died. To confirm every property, you would have to look up every property's court case, and there is not an automated way to do this. It does not mean these properties will never go through probate or necessarily that the owner did not have a will, but that a will was either not filed or a will was filed but did not go to probate.

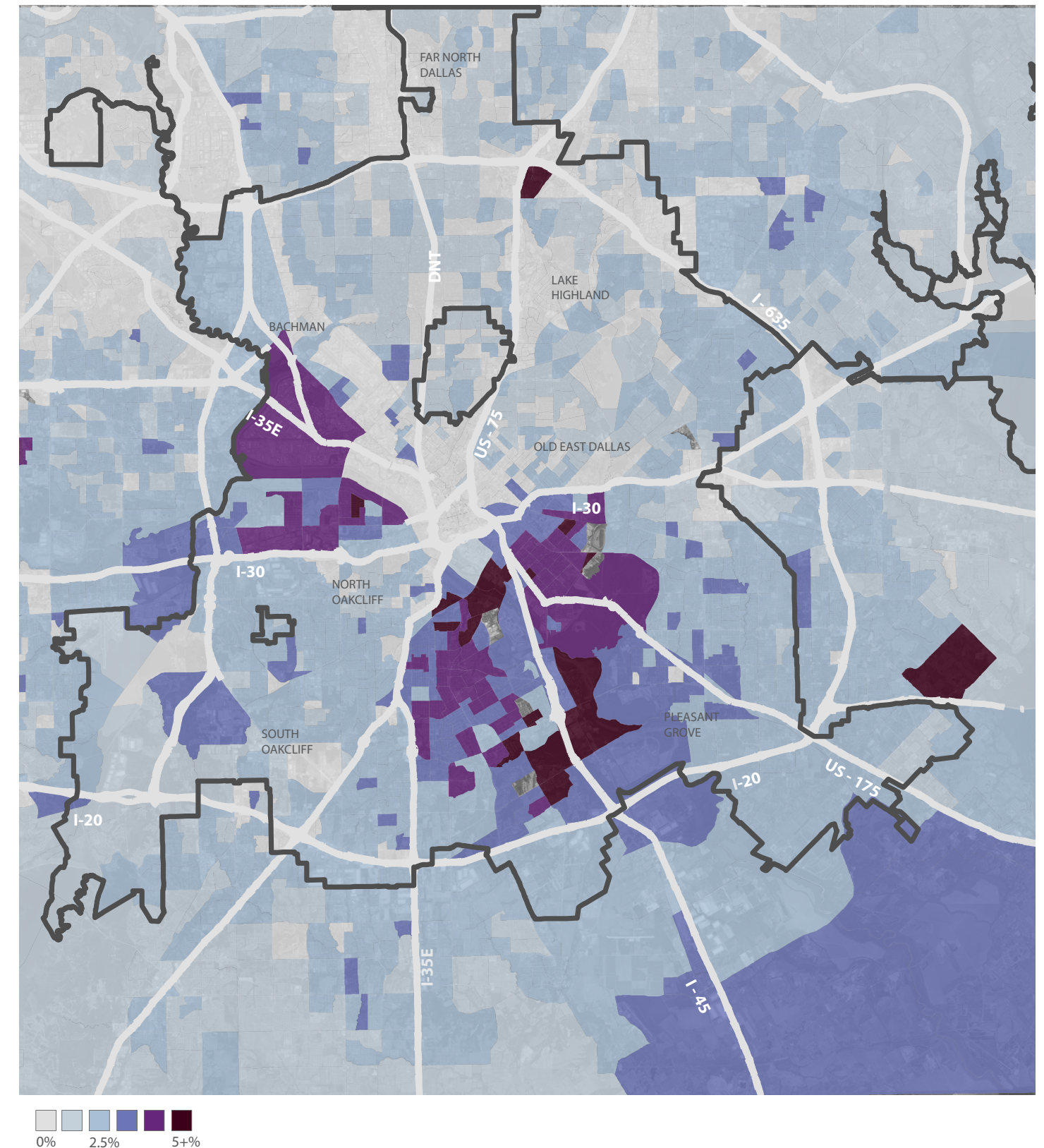
**HEIRS PROPERTIES  
IN DALLAS  
COUNTY:  
1.1% OR ~644,331  
PROPERTIES**

**EQUALS LOST  
VALUE BETWEEN  
\$107,464,138 -  
\$252,210,298**

We discovered that approximately 1.1% of all residential properties in Dallas (644,331) could potentially be heirs properties.<sup>18</sup> The estimated value of these confirmed properties is \$981,360,500, with a mean value per property of \$141,060. When expanded to include all 9541 potential properties, the potential value increases to \$1,521,368,140, with a mean value of \$159,455 per property.

When broken down by property type and condition, using the range of strictest to least strict weighting method, one can estimate that the lost value of property solely attributable to heirs status is approximately \$107,464,138.37 to \$252,210,298.59 (when compared to neighboring properties that are not heirs). The lost annual tax revenue from these properties could be somewhere between \$3,008,995.87 and \$7,061,885.36.

Figure 1: Concentrations of Heir's Property by Block Groups



<sup>17</sup> Listed owners on DCAD included more than 3 individuals, estate of, etc

<sup>18</sup> Other estimates: Wake County, NC approximately ~2000 parcels, Bartels 2012. Durham County NC ~ 2% Johnson 2019

The housing market in Dallas County, as a whole, has grown by approximately 140% since 2014. If one considers that this growth will continue at roughly that rate over the next five years, these properties could represent hundreds of millions more in additional wealth. The geographic distribution of heirs property is also highly concentrated. We found that 38% of the value of heirs property and 35% of the number of confirmed parcels (2,434) are concentrated in only 7.2% of the county's block groups. There are also statistically significant areas of low concentration clustering in the northern portion of the county.<sup>19</sup>

More notably, the areas with the highest proportion of heirs properties are also in areas with the highest proportion of Black residents. Heirs properties represent 1.7% of the total residential value, or \$290,885,330 of \$16,543,949,510. In terms of parcels, 2.4%, or 3,473 out of 141,165 parcels potentially have a cloudy title.

These are also some of the areas of the city with the highest concentrations of buildings constructed prior to the 1950s, where new development was not financed due to redlining and Federal Housing Administration (FHA) loan denials throughout the mid-twentieth century.<sup>20</sup>

## CONDITIONS OF HEIRS PROPERTIES

We also looked at current land use and condition of heirs properties. Heirs properties are far more likely to be land-only, or have a lower desirability rating by Dallas County Appraisal District (DCAD). Desirability rates the condition of a structure on a parcel and is used to determine the appraised value by the Appraisal District. Here we see heirs properties rated lower than properties in the city as a whole and relative to neighboring property that is not heirs properties. This finding supports early concerns of disinvestment in properties or loss of potential wealth.

Figure 2. Heirs Desirability

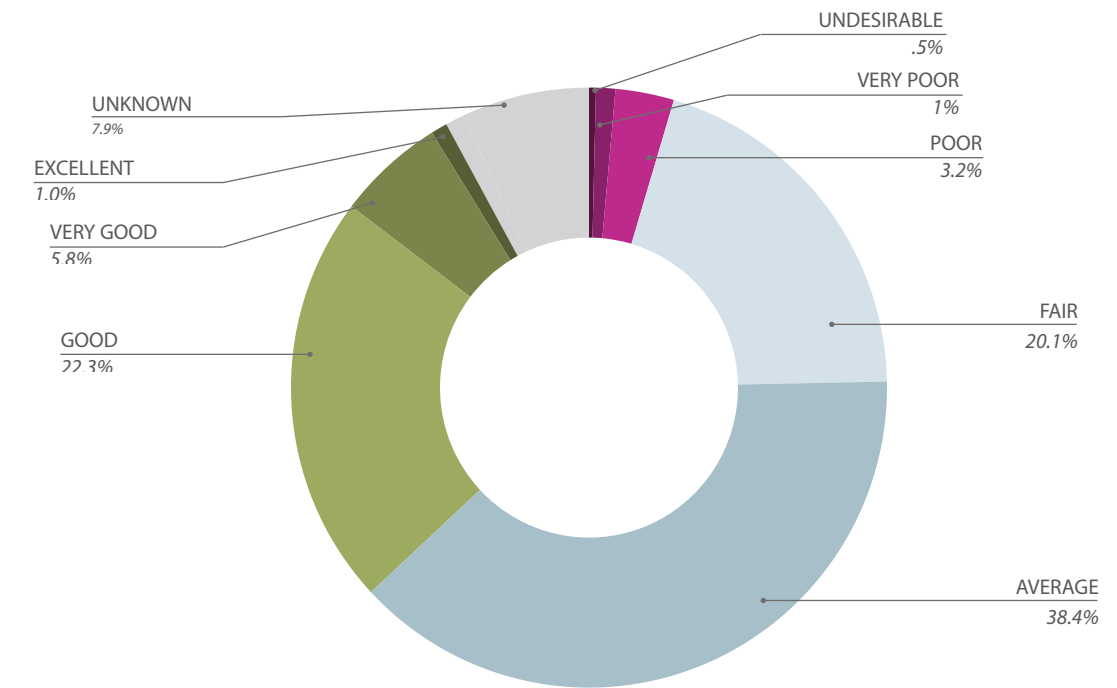
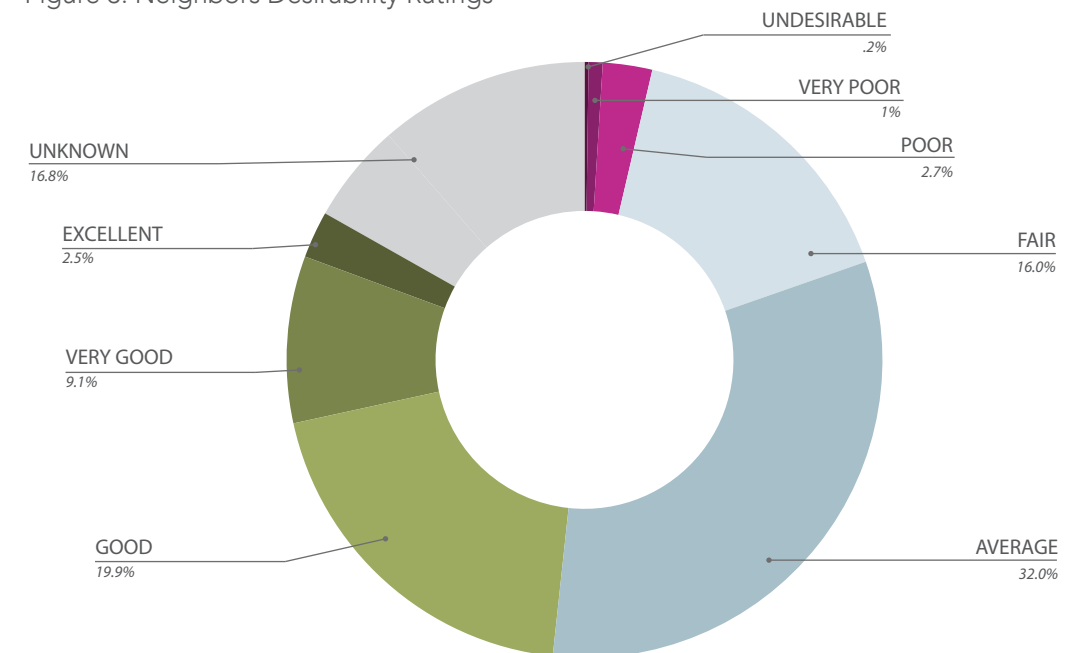


Figure 3. Neighbors Desirability Ratings



<sup>19</sup> Statistically significant high value clustering in these areas at the 95% confidence interval using the most sensitive morans I clustering test

<sup>20</sup> Dallas HOLC Map, Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity



## AREAS OF POTENTIAL LOSS

The history of heirs property loss indicates a strong relationship between development interest, growth in values, and the loss of heirs property. When looking at the concentrations of change between 2014 and 2019 (Figure 4), we can see that many of the areas with high concentration of heirs property (circled areas) are in areas of high interest. Combining that with the Percent of Value Growth in Figure 5, one sees that the areas with the highest value

growth also overlaps with the highest concentrations of heirs properties. This may be an indicator of neighborhoods most at-risk of development pressure and heirs property loss. A further study could look at the role development pressure plays in resolving or clearing title of heirs property.

Figure 4: Concentration of Change

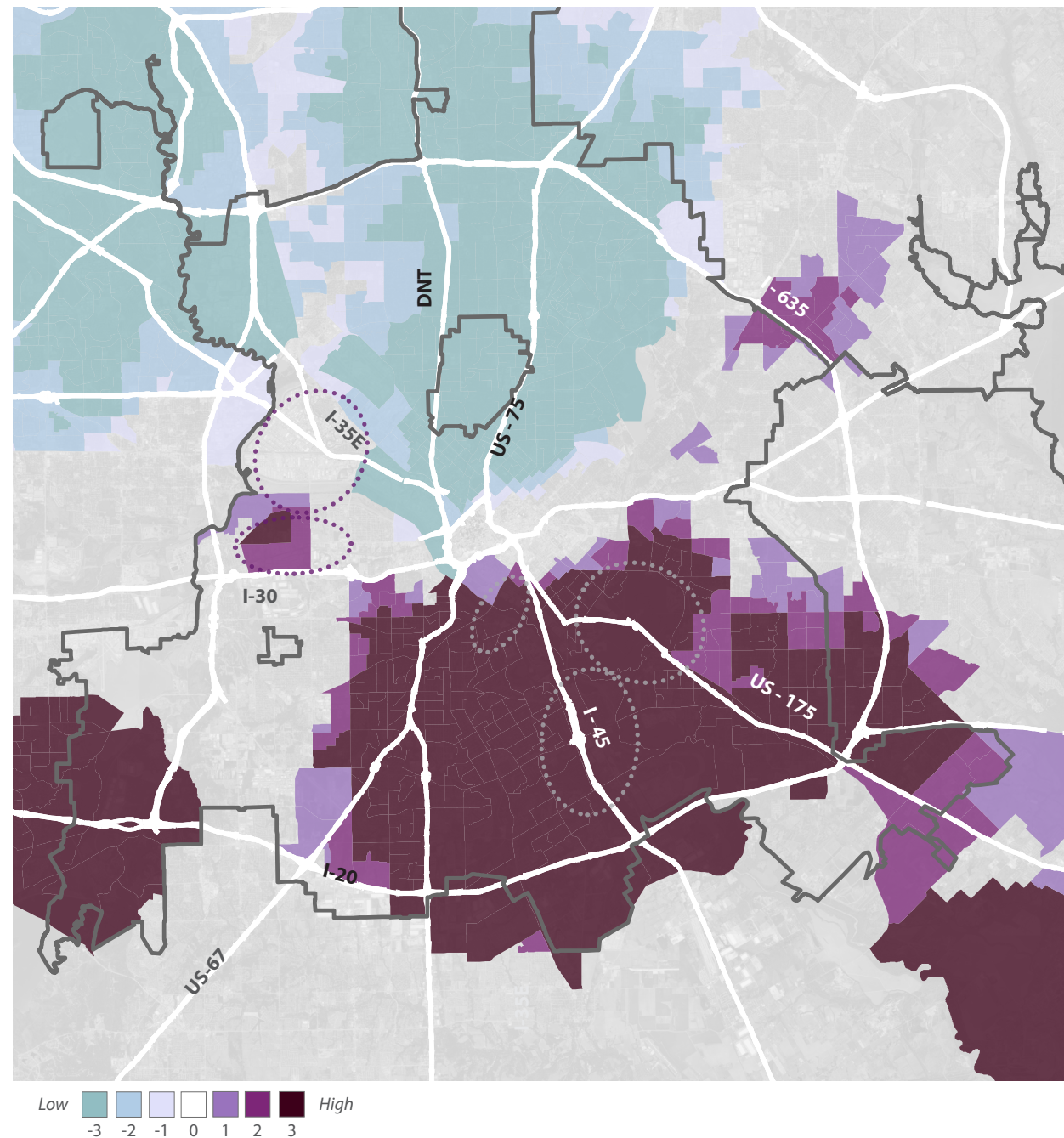
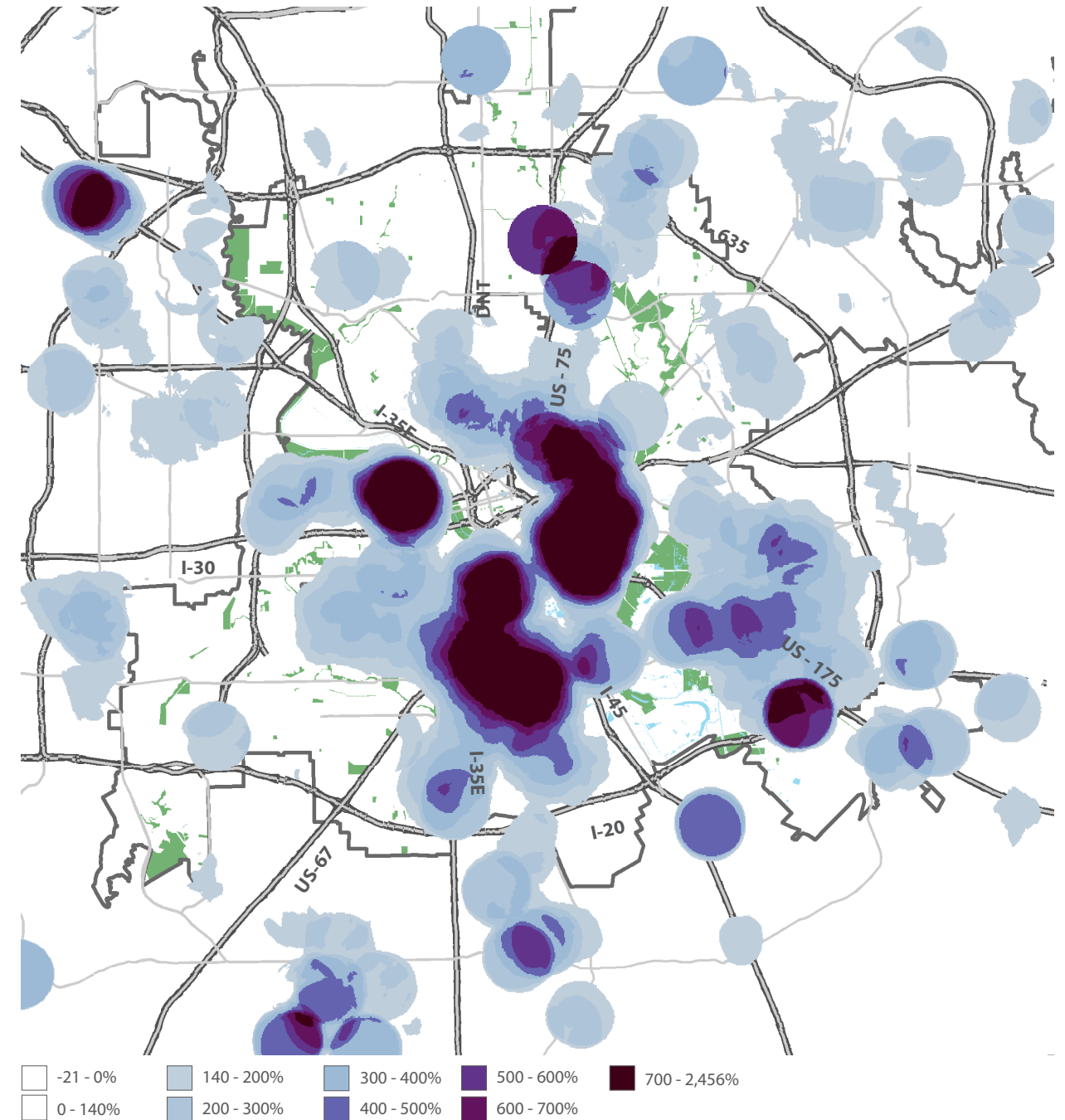


Figure 5: Percent Value Growth



## POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

As we look to address the challenges of heirs properties in Dallas County, we should not solely seek to support individuals and families in clearing their titles. Our solutions must recognize that heirs properties are a remnant of our exclusionary past, which prevented households of color from building stability and wealth for the next generation. This must include asking more questions about the current impacts of past racial policies.

There are a variety of methods that can help limit or resolve heirs property issues. The following section lists some of these solutions, various actors' roles in these solutions, and the scales at which they might occur.

### Individual

- **Plan for Your Future:** Prepare a transfer on death deed or write a will to help pass a clear title to the next generation.
- **Keep Your Property Taxes Up to Date:** Reach out to your tax assessor's office and make sure that your taxes are paid. Confirm that all communication is being sent to the person responsible for making sure the property tax bills.
- **Document Your Family Tree:** Find out the names on the deed for your land and lay out each generation of heirs that has followed. You can use legal documents from the county, like birth certificates and marriage licenses, as well as family letters, obituaries, information from genealogy websites and records from family reunions.
- **Create a Paper Trail:** If you inherited your property without a will or formal estate plan, you may be able to file an affidavit of heirship to establish your ownership. Documentation supporting your connection to the property will help your ownership claim.
- **Consolidate Ownership:** See if some of the other heirs are willing to transfer their portion of the property to a singular heir or the heirs with the closest ties to the property.

- **Explore Co-Ownership:** Talk to a lawyer you trust about setting up a trust, or limited partnership, or limited liability corporation. This can spread decision-making to a group of people.
- **Track Property Expenses:** If you pay for anything related to the property, like property taxes or improvements to the home, make sure you keep a record. If a partition sale is started, you may be able to receive a larger share of the proceeds.<sup>21</sup>

### City of Dallas/County

- **Expand Program Eligibility:** City and county programs could ensure that there are mechanisms for people without a clear title but a significant claim to a property to have a way to access funds for home repair and other programs.
- **Support Resident Estate Planning:** Fund Estate planning services, including filing transfer on death deeds or preparing a will. Efforts should first target areas with the highest concentrations of heirs properties.
- **Estate Planning Outreach & Education:** Fund outreach and education efforts related to estate planning and property transfer, including information on how the probate system works, impact of cloudy title on property valuation and taxes, addressing tax liens, and fair market value property sales.
- **Funds Title Clearing Efforts:** Clearing title can be expensive and time-consuming. Funds should be made available for the legal costs associated with clearing title. Additionally, a support fund could be available to residents going through the process to cover additional expenses such as transportation, childcare, and other expenses that accrue during a legal process.

- **Create Buyout Program:** Offer a way for co-tenants, living in their property, to buy out the other heirs. Residents of heirs properties are provided an opportunity to buyout their co-tenants before a forced sale. However, many are unable to access capital or have the funds on hand to make this an option. City or county support for these residents may offer additional protection for those in rapidly changing or gentrifying neighborhoods.
- **Tax Relief Programs for Heirs of Inherit Property:** Address the potential of heirs property loss during the probate process, by offering a tax relief program or stay while the property's title is cleared.
- **Establishing Familial Title Options:** Not all titles need to be cleared individually. Families may choose to set up trusts, or limited partnership, that can hold property and be bound by a set of bylaws determining how these properties are used. This can spread decision-making to a group of people and can ensure that a property is kept out of play in individual debt collection processes.

### Judges

- **Education Efforts:** Ensure that judges are allowed to access educational workshops on the potential impacts of rulings in heirs property cases.

### Non-profits

- **Target Support Resources:** Work to identify people with title issues and help resolve them through legal support.
- **Partner for Better Development:** Work with developers to ensure equitable development in neighborhoods with high rates of heirs property.

### State and Federal

- **Amend Homeowner Programs:** Change homeowner program requirements to allow residents of heirs properties to access program resources.



Photo Credit: [bc]

<sup>21</sup> Presser, 2019



Photo Credit: [bc]

## ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS TO ASK

- What happens to people after they clear title or sell their homes?
- This process has been going on for many years, how can we assess that process on a longitudinal scale?
- What can be done to adjust investor behavior, including targeting heirs properties for investment and offering below-market offers on properties with cloudy title properties?
  - What are the impacts of investor actions on neighbors?
  - What are the neighborhood impacts for wealth capture and creation, and neighborhood stability in neighborhoods with a high number of heirs properties?
- How do heirs properties prepare for disasters?
  - How do they purchase flood insurance?
  - Can funding be established to support residents of heirs property recover from disasters?
  - What would be required to adjust Federal policies to allow heirs owners to take advantage of homeowner disaster recovery programs?
- How can local jurisdictions support the removal of liens from heirs properties: target outreach on tax payment plan, abatements, and new homestead exemptions options?
- How can we support heirs holders, with significant ties to the neighborhood, in establishing a land trusts, or other tools to support the familial ownership of their property?

# APPENDIX

## Methodology

- Identifying Heirs Property
  - Based on conversations with Dallas County Appraisal District representatives, the only confirmed measure of heirs property in DCAD databases is the demarcation 'Estate Of' in the name field of a given account. After running a few different exploratory queries, it seemed that some properties also contained the abbreviated form 'Est Of.' This list of properties was marked as confirmed. It should be noted that without cross-referencing with death records and legal documents, it is impossible to tell if a property is truly intestate or a product of another form of property succession.
  - To create a list of likely properties, a list of all parcels was run through a weighting algorithm. This algorithm was developed based on information from a few studies. The key variables were: not business owned property, properties containing et al or etal in the name field, properties with old dates of last transfer, properties with billing addresses different than the property address, and properties with an out of state billing address. All queries were run using Python 3.7, then joined and exported to shapefile formats for further geospatial analysis.
    - Name data is dispersed through different fields, and in different databases. All residential data sheets were compiled to create a list of all account numbers, then name information from the MULTI\_OWNERS sheet and the ACCOUNT\_INFO sheet were merged into one large field to query, named CONCAT\_NAME. This field contained all potential ownership names associated with an account.
    - First, all the property accounts that could be "Confirmed" based on 'estate of' were isolated and demarcated.
    - Next, properties that contained the text LLC, LP, INC, CORP, or LTD were eliminated from the dataset. Businesses and other legal vehicles cannot be heirs properties.
    - Next, a query was run on the remainder of the properties that looked for 'Et Al' and 'EtAl' in the name field, ignoring punctuation or case. If a property contained this name key, it was given a Boolean value of 1.
    - From there, I looked at those properties for those with owners who lived out of state, owners who did not live on the property, and properties with a deed transfer date before 1969. These factors have all been used in existing literature to determine likely heir properties. For each condition that was true, a property was given a value of 1.
    - Four datasets were assembled, one for each year, 2014 and 2019, based on decreasing degrees of strictness.
      - Tier 1 dataset was those properties that were confirmed, and those properties with an old transfer date or an out of state billing address. Old transfer date in this case is weighted slightly higher than the other two fields.
      - Tier 2 dataset included properties that were confirmed, properties that matched the name query, and properties with any 2 of the 3 additional search criteria met.
      - Tier 3 dataset includes properties that were confirmed, properties that matched the name query, and properties that met any of the additional search criteria.
      - Tier 4 dataset includes any properties that were confirmed, and any properties that matched the name query.
      - [table in this section of the different strictness levels # of properties, potential values, and percent of overall parcels and value]

## Analyzing Demographics

- American Community Survey data from 2017 was gathered at the block group level, the most recent year available at this geography. Because of the dispersion of properties, block groups were chosen for a more precise neighborhood level approach. Different scales of Census geography might make more sense at a larger scale, or for an analysis that is more focused on developing the relationship between heirs clearance, changes in property status, and

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## Interviews

1. Cheryl Jordan, community relations at DCAD about DCAD process
2. Dr. Cassandra Gaither Johnson, USDA heirs property researcher
3. Sean Johnson, heirs researcher at UNC
4. Laquesha Levers, former owner of heir property in South Dallas/Forest District
5. Sandy Rollins from Texas Tenants Union
6. Maureen Mulligan, City of Dallas

